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Title: Governor to visit Farmers' Market today

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Writer: Jim Turner

Lead:

Governor Ernie Fletcher will be in Logan County today for a ceremonial check presentation.

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Governor Ernie Fletcher will be in Logan County today for a ceremonial check presentation.

Fletcher will appear at the new Farmers' Market at 1:15 p.m. to help celebrate the official grand opening of the facility which already is being put to good use.

The Logan County Chamber of Commerce will conduct a ribbon cutting immediately following the check presentation. Refreshments will be served from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. The public is invited.

Fletcher and the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board are making the check presentation to the Logan County Extension District Board, which received approval for \$70,000 in Logan County funds and \$50,000 in Kentucky Agricultural Development state funds to construct a permanent marketing facility for the Logan County Farmers' Market organization.

The Logan County Farmers' Market, which had been setting up at the intersection of Fourth and Spring streets in Russellville for several years, moved to the new location in late June.

While the number of vendors has not changed much, the volume of business has increased dramatically.

The facility was also used last Tuesday as a show ring for the annual 4-H and FFA Steer Show and Sale. The Logan County Cattlemen's Association worked at improving the parking lot around the open-air pavilion setup to prepare for the occasion.

County Agricultural and Natural Resources Agent Chris Milam has been at the forefront of getting the 60 by 100-foot, all-steel facility, which includes a meeting room and restrooms, ready for use.

The Fletcher Administration- especially Commissioner of Agriculture Richie Farmer- has

been highly supportive of agricultural diversification in the form of Farmers' Markets. Many property owners have diverted their tobacco patches into expanded fruit and vegetable production operations.

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture provides many services to Kentucky farmers' markets. In the past year the Department has:

- Held four regional summits;
- Conducted numerous other educational programs and provided technical assistance to markets throughout the Commonwealth;
- Conducted a cost-share program that has helped several markets advertise;
- Published a comprehensive farmers' market manual that other states are using as a model;
- Given \$1,000 and staff time to help form the Kentucky Farmers' Market Association;
- Posted a registry of Kentucky farmers' markets on the Web at www.kyagr.com;
- Provided promotional items such as market bags and price cards at cost; and
- Featured farmers' markets and other produce outlets in the Kentucky Proud marketing campaign; and

Farmers' market sales contributed to farm income of more than \$4.13 billion in Kentucky in 2004. UK experts say farm receipts could again top \$4 billion and maybe even set a record this year. Economists say a \$100,000 increase in farm sales creates up to five new jobs and generates another \$200,000 in economic activity.

“When people buy from farmers' markets, they add to farmers' incomes and help them stay in farming instead of selling their land for development,” Commissioner Farmer said. “It also helps the environment because their food travels a short distance to get to the market.”

More than 3,800 farmers' markets operate throughout the nation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported. USDA estimates nationwide farmers' market sales at more than \$1 billion.

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